

# The East Dome of San Marco, Venice: A Reconsideration

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*To the memory of Ernest Hawkins*

In his appreciation of the late great Otto Demus, Hans Belting tells a story about an encounter between Demus and Ernest Hawkins at San Marco in which Demus rebutted Hawkins' archaeological reasons for the dating of the east dome on the grounds of stylistic evidence. Belting concludes the story with the words "in the end, as we know today, he was right."<sup>1</sup> Demus himself, however, was at pains to stress that his monumental publication on the mosaics of San Marco was "not the last word."<sup>2</sup> It is in this spirit that we would like to offer an alternative interpretation of the reconstruction of the east dome mosaics, emending the chronology and suggesting that the dating of the east dome of San Marco can be shown to be less secure than has been believed.

Such a redating is of considerable importance. Demus states that "the mosaics of the east dome of San Marco . . . are certainly among the most important parts of the decoration and perhaps the most revealing. They seem to contain the key to the understanding not only of the iconographic program of the church as a whole, but also of the stylistic development of the twelfth century on Venetian soil."<sup>3</sup> It is partially from his dating of the dome that he assigns dates to much of the rest of the decoration of the church. Consequently, a correct dating of the mosaics of the east dome is a significant issue in the internal organization and dating of the mosaics of San Marco. A revised dating calls for a redating of the monument as a whole and, further, for a reconsideration of twelfth-century art in Italy.

The mosaics of the east dome consist of a bust medallion of Christ Emmanuel at the center of the dome and radially arranged figures placed around the base of the dome (Fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> The bust of Christ has been remade several times, though the iconography is probably original. It now appears somewhat black because the cleaning to which the rest of the mosaic was subjected in 1975 did not extend above the neck.<sup>5</sup> The so-called rain-

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<sup>1</sup>*DOP* 45 (1991), x.

<sup>2</sup>O. Demus, *The Mosaics of San Marco in Venice*, I (Chicago, 1984), xii & xiv.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 43.

<sup>4</sup>These are described fully in *ibid.*, I, ch. 6, 43–53, and ch. 14, 160–70.

<sup>5</sup>Ernest Hawkins' notes on the cleaning in 1975 record the problems involved in this.

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bow border around the medallion, in alternate blocks of red and blue, has also undergone much repair and restoration.

An orant Virgin stands at the western axis of the dome. The figures of the prophet-kings, David and Solomon, and then the prophets, Malachai, Zachariah, Haggai, Sofonios,<sup>6</sup> Jonah, Hosea, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah run clockwise from her right hand back again to her left. The main axis of the dome runs from west to east through the Virgin. The dome is divided by a clear suture in the gold background. It runs between the figures of Isaiah and Jeremiah, crossing Isaiah's inscription so that he and his name lie on one side, while the abbreviation PHA lies on the other. The suture follows a ragged course above the heads of Jeremiah, Daniel, Obadiah, and Habakkuk, running down through the halo of Habakkuk, cutting off the top right corner, down to the base of the dome between Habakkuk and Hosea (illustrated in Fig. 1). Two groups, stylistically distinct, are thus formed. The larger, of nine figures plus the Virgin, includes David and Solomon, and the prophets Malachai, Zachariah, Haggai, Sofonios, Jonas, Hosea, and Isaiah; the smaller, four-figure group consists of Jeremiah, Daniel, Obadiah, and Habakkuk. The gold mosaic backgrounds on either side of the dividing suture differ. That of the nine prophet group is mixed, including a sprinkling of silver; that of the four prophet group is of a fairly regular type in size, shape, quality, and color. This difference is most apparent at the sutures between the upper parts of the figures of Isaiah and Jeremiah (Fig. 2), and also between Habakkuk and Hosea.

The figures of Jeremiah, Daniel, Obadiah, and Habakkuk occupy more space than the other figures; their poses and gestures are broader and more sweeping. They differ from the other figures in style, color, and material and the lettering of their inscriptions. Daniel, however, is not entirely of this phase. The inscription, a band passing through the upper part of his body, and his right arm and hand belong to the Four Prophet Phase. The upper limit of this area is indicated by a kink on either side of his halo. The rest, including the floral decoration of the window bay, is stylistically and technically a part of the other group, though it is tempting to suggest that Daniel's head is a recent remake.

In his 1984 publication of the mosaics of San Marco, Demus noted these two phases of the east dome.<sup>7</sup> He suggested that they were the result of some sort of catastrophe, either a fire or an earthquake, which probably occurred at some point in the twelfth century. One phase of the decoration represents precatastrophe mosaic, the other is repair work. Demus' belief was that Phase 1, the precatastrophe phase, consisted of the group of four, Jeremiah, the upper part of Daniel, Obadiah, and Habakkuk, together with the PHA of Isaiah's inscription. This, the original decoration, was dated on stylistic grounds to the early part of the twelfth century. The remaining nine prophets and the Virgin form the later repair work, dated to the seventies of the twelfth century.

We believe that these two phases should be inverted, that Demus' Phase 1, the four prophets, is secondary to the nine prophets and the Virgin. We also believe that the time between the two phases is considerably less than the fifty years or so suggested by Demus. For the sake of clarity, we shall refer to our Phase 1, which is Demus' Phase 2, as the Nine

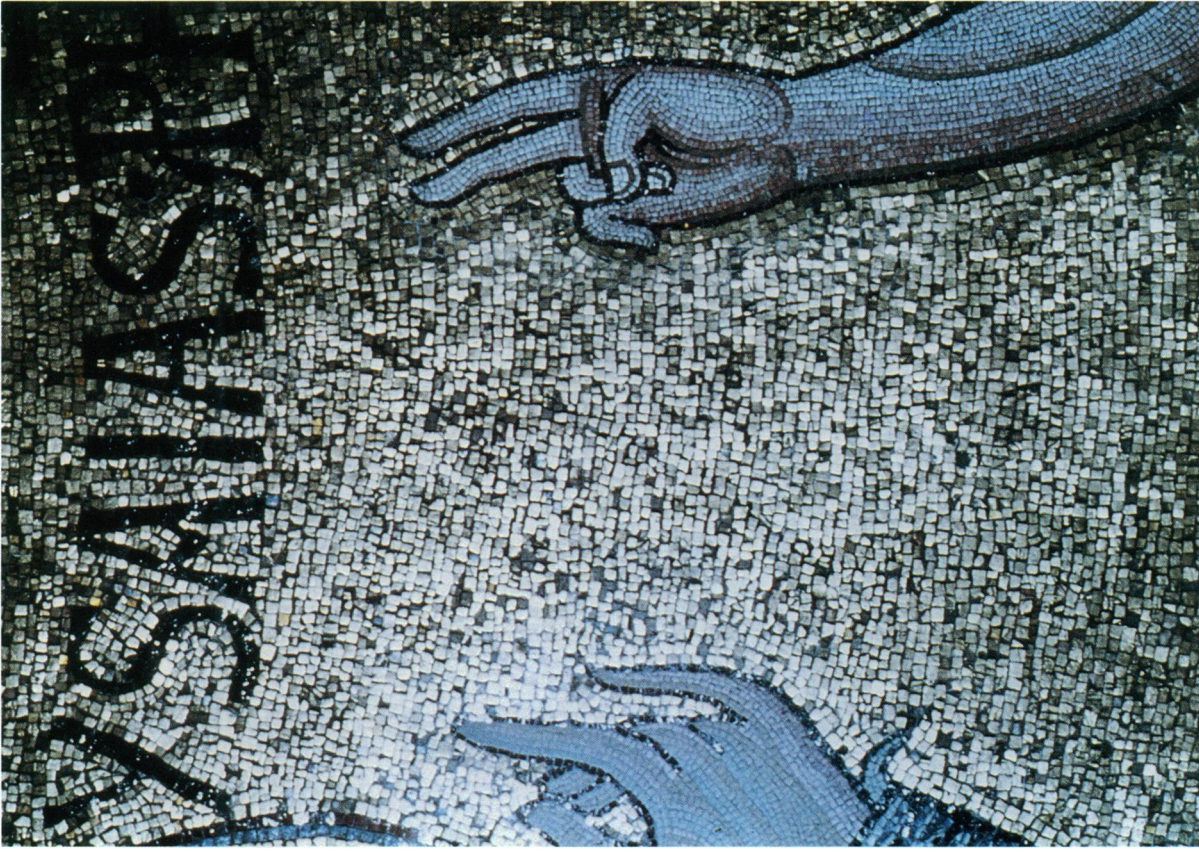
<sup>6</sup>Sofonios is the form in which the name of the prophet Zephaniah appears in 2 Esd. 1:40.

<sup>7</sup>See Demus, *Mosaics of San Marco*, I, 43–45.

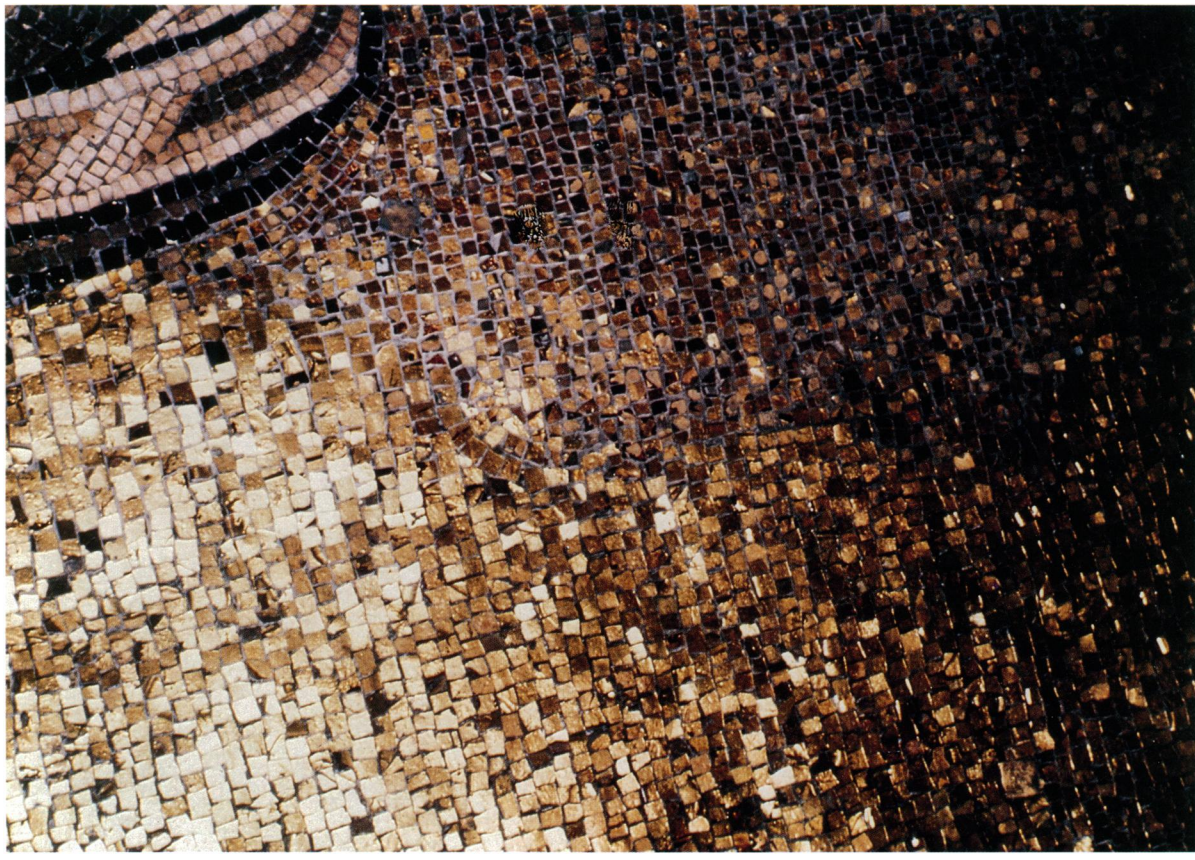


1 The east dome and suture (photo: after Demus, *Mosaics of San Marco*, pl. 27)





2 Gold ground between Isaiah and Jeremiah (photo: Ernest Hawkins)



3 Hosea and the two-line contour (photo: Ernest Hawkins)





4 Obadiah's inscription



5 Hosea's sleeve and forearm with the double line of tesserae



6 Hosea's scroll

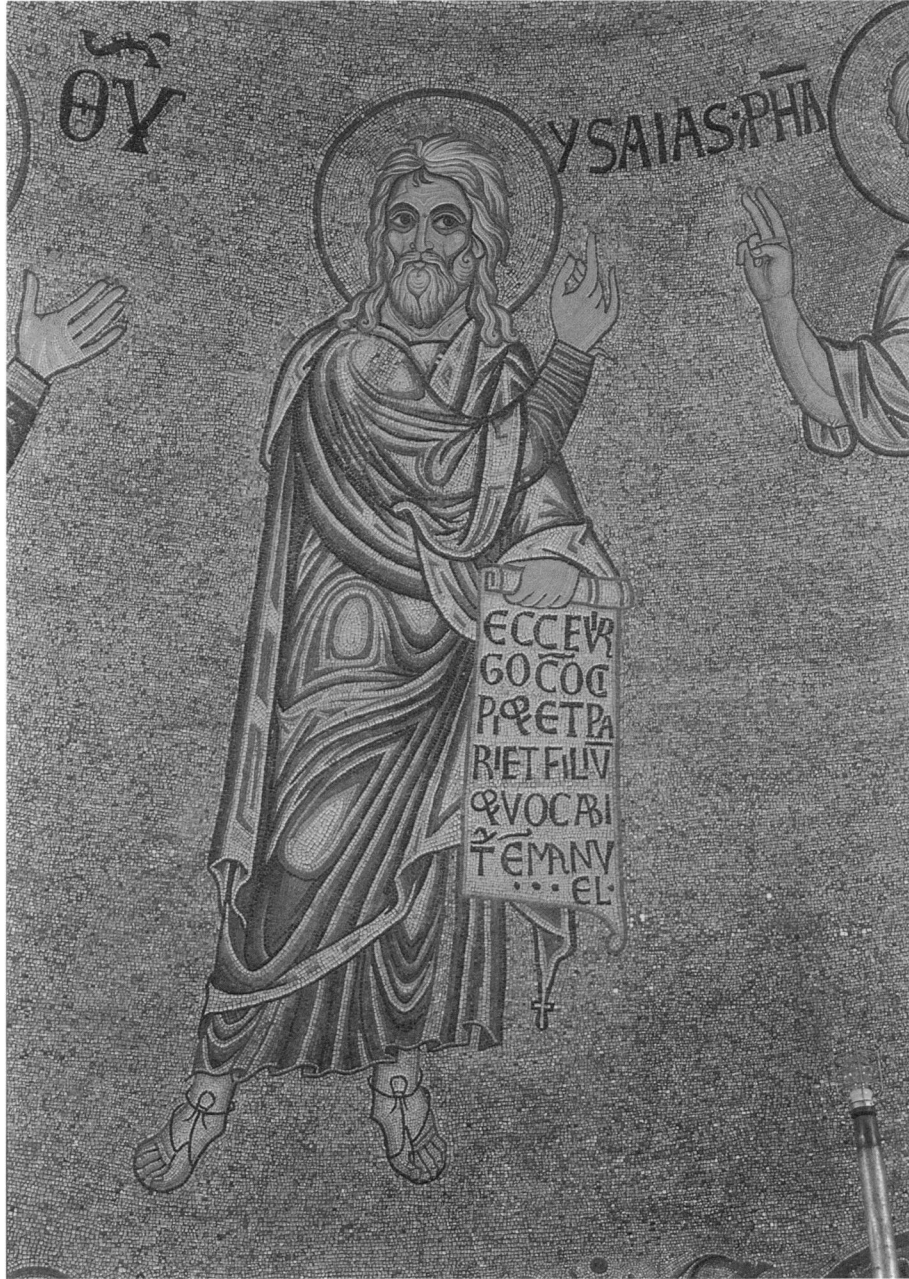




7 Obadiah's right hand

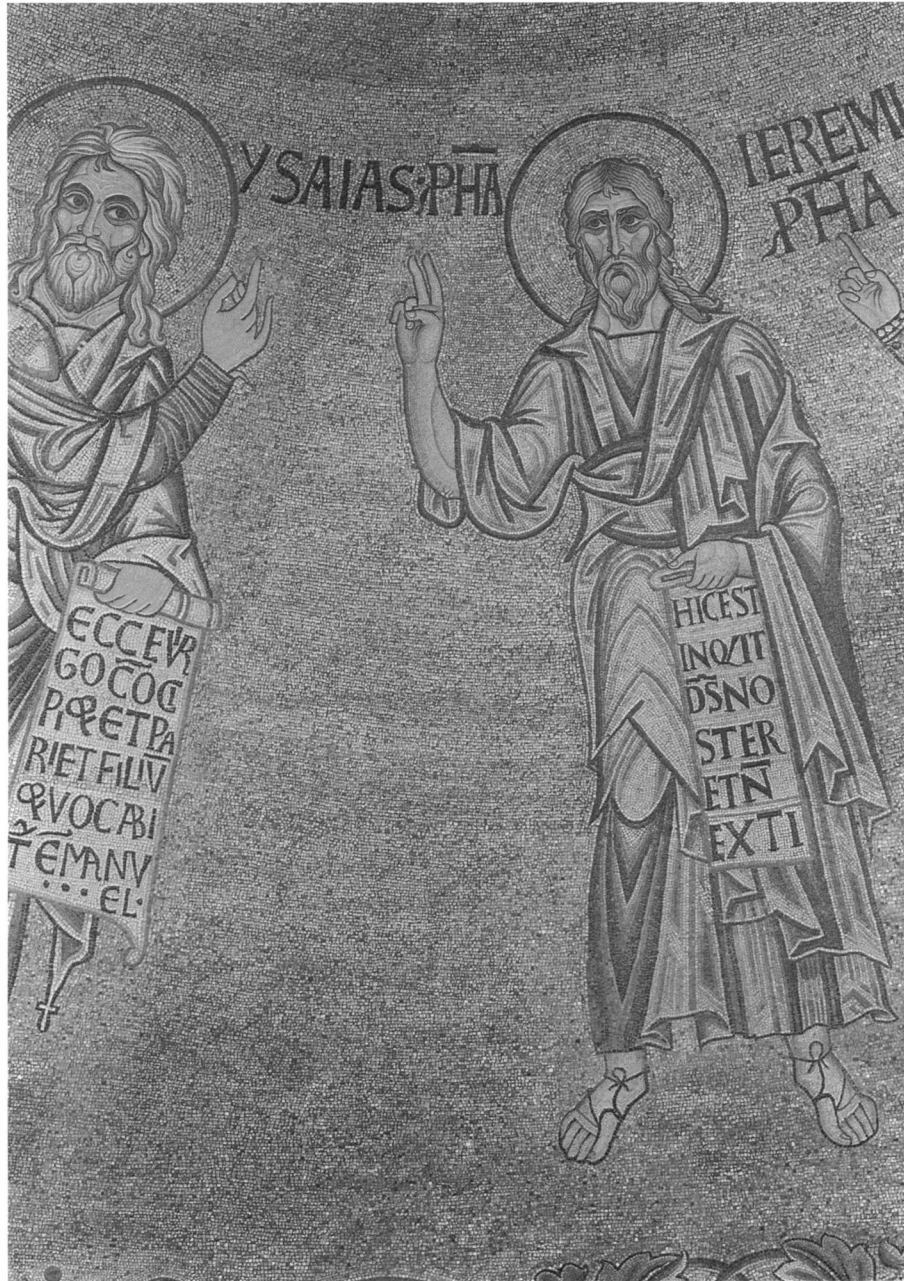


8 Daniel's inscription

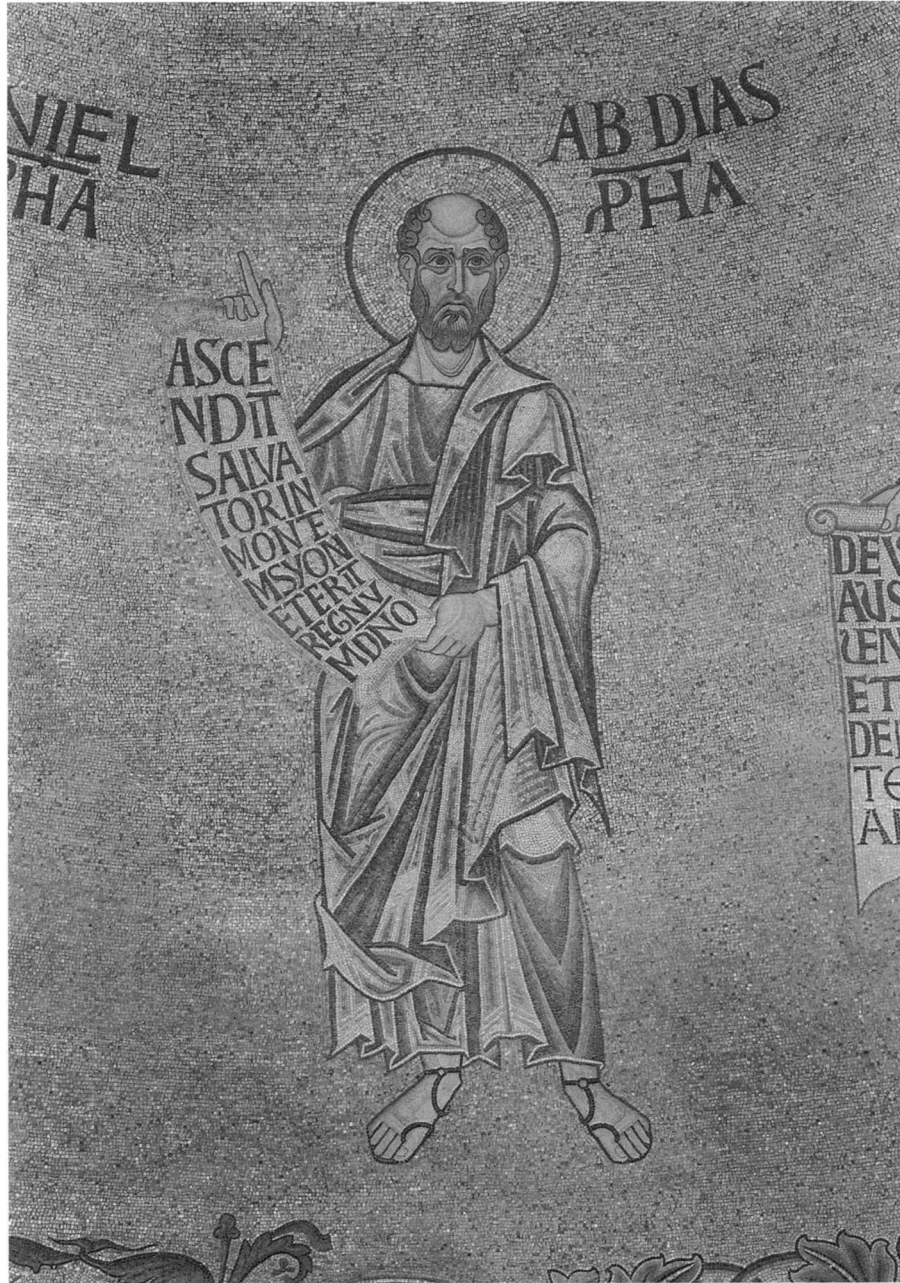


9 Isaiah (photo: Courtesy of the Photographic Archives, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.)



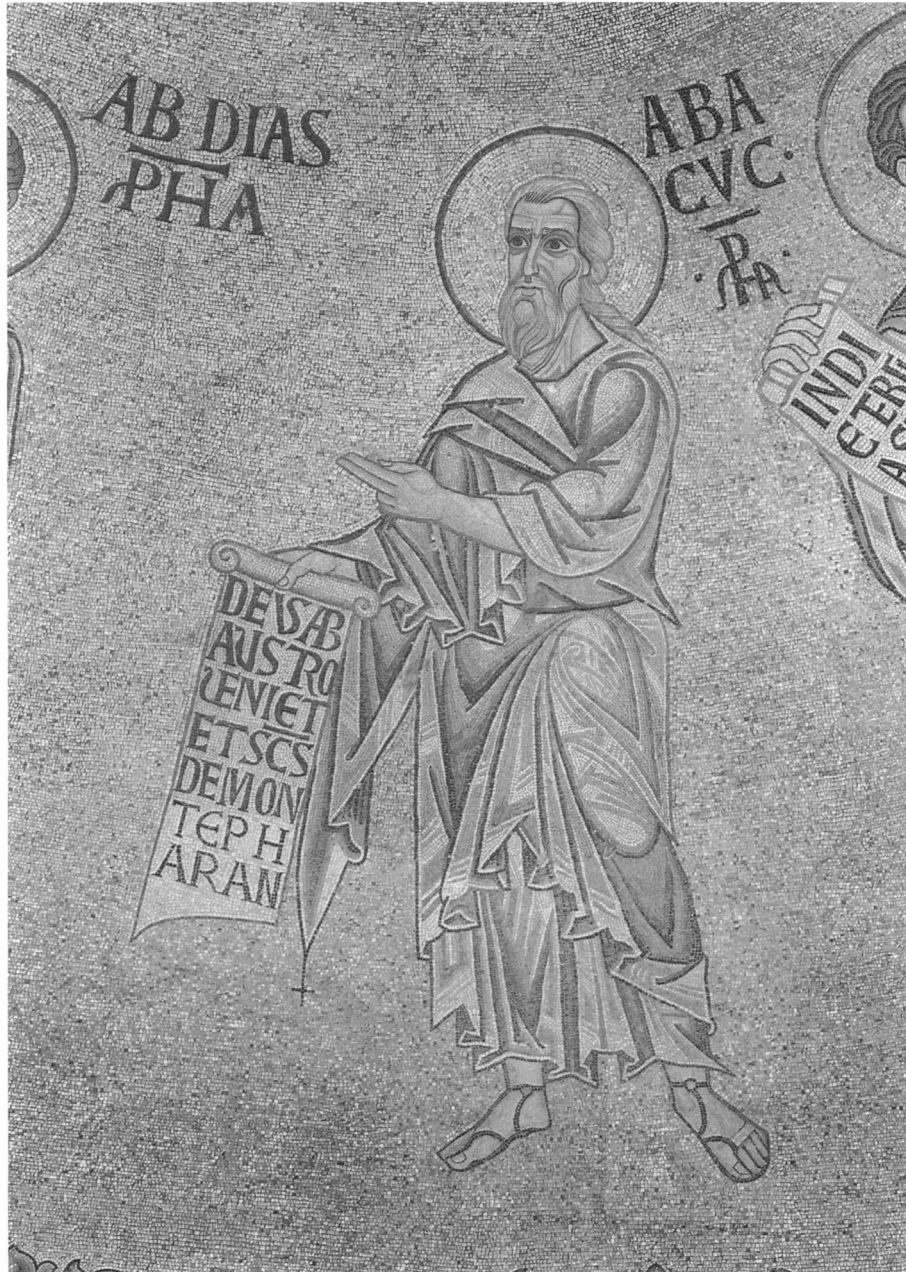


10 Jeremiah (photo: Courtesy of the Photographic Archives, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.)

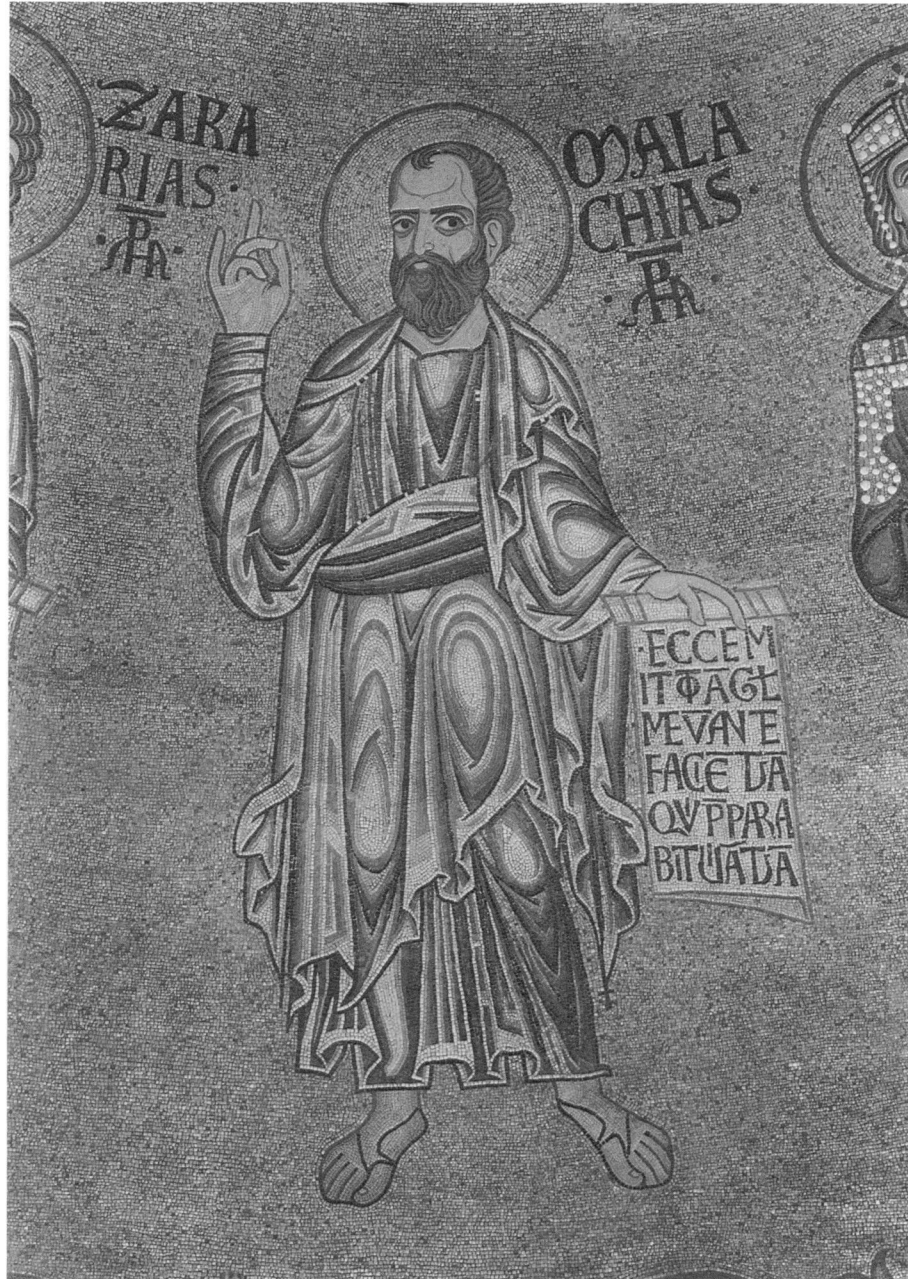


11 Obadiah (photo: Courtesy of the Photographic Archives, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.)





12 Habakkuk (photo: Courtesy of the Photographic Archives, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.)



13 Malachi (photo: Courtesy of the Photographic Archives, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.)

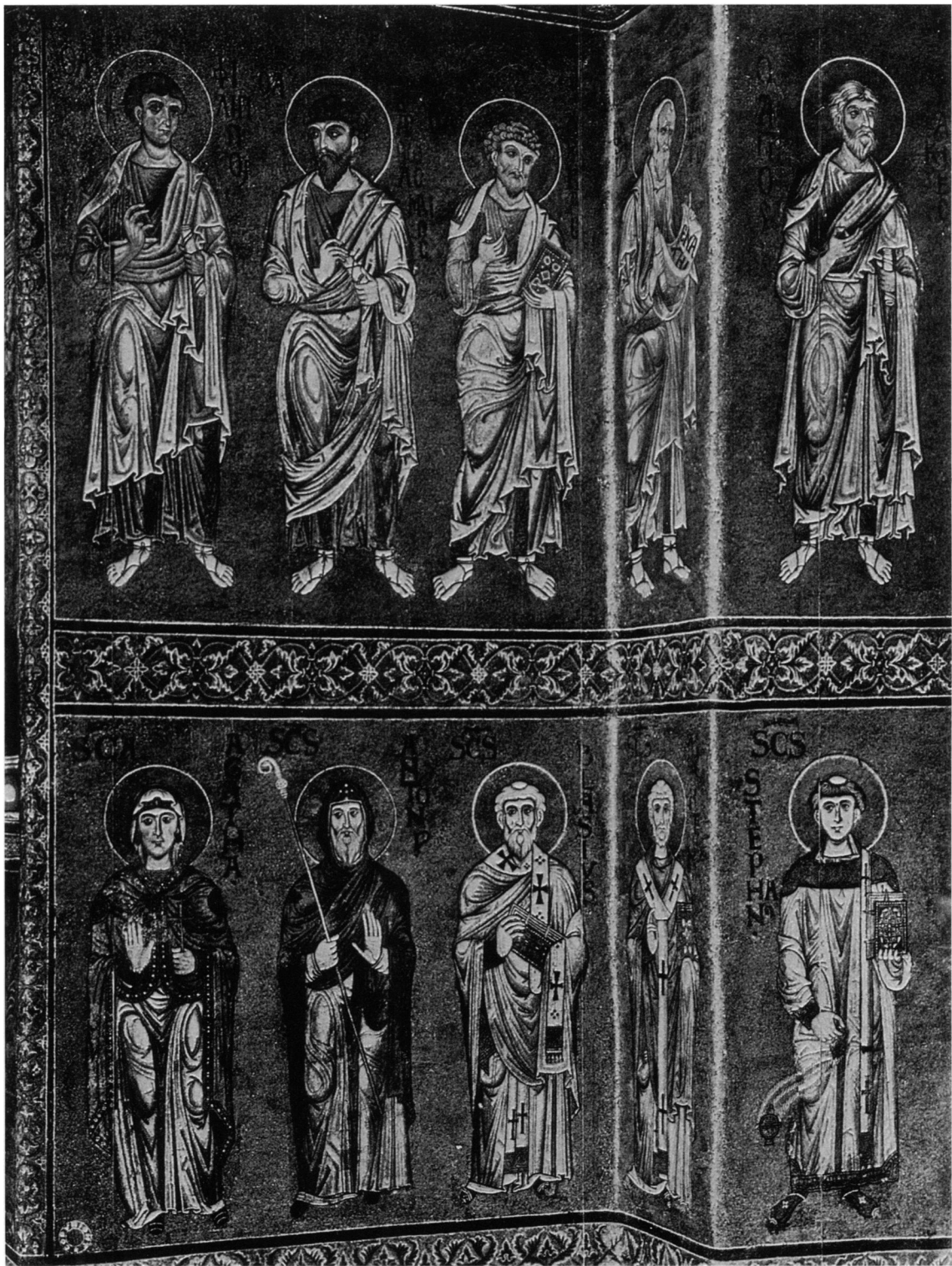




14 Detail of St. Gregory, north transept, north wall, Cappella Palatina  
(photo: Courtauld Institute)



15 Mark's head from the main apse, San Marco  
(photo: Courtesy of the Photographic Archives, National  
Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.)



16 Standing saints, apse, Monreale (photo: Courtauld Institute)

Prophet Phase, and to our Phase 2, Demus' Phase 1, as the Four Prophet Phase. Demus' arguments in support of his chronology rest on three foundations: archaeology, style, and paleography.

### 1. THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE DOME MOSAICS<sup>8</sup>

(i). Two curved lines appear in the gold tesserae surface, which is otherwise set in horizontal rows, to the right of Habakkuk, near the elbow of Hosea. Demus believes these to be the remnant of a contour accompanying a destroyed figure replaced by the Nine Prophet Phase figure of Hosea (Figs. 3 and 5).

(ii). The Four Prophet Phase contains the orange glass called *becco di merlo* by Demus, but which we prefer to call orange vermillion.<sup>9</sup> This glass is absent in the Nine Prophet Phase, where red enamel and reddish-brown terra-cotta tesserae are used. Demus takes these to be imitations of the orange vermillion, an attempt to imitate the original palette. Similarly, he suggests that the white enamel and white and pink marble used in the hair and faces of the Four Prophet Phase is imitated by the use of limestone in the Nine Prophet Phase. He argues that the palette of the Four Prophet Phase is generally lighter and more brilliant than that of the Nine Prophet Phase. The implication seems to be that it must therefore be earlier.

### 2. ARTISTIC STYLE

This issue will be examined more thoroughly later in the article. Briefly, however, Demus contrasts the tall, slender, elegant figures of the Four Prophet Phase with the stocky, bulkier figures of the Nine Prophet Phase. He argues that the former is closer to an eleventh-century classicizing style, the latter to the characteristics of twelfth-century style.

### 3. PALEOGRAPHY

A study of the paleography of the mosaics of San Marco as a whole was carried out by Rudolf M. Kloos.<sup>10</sup> In the east dome itself, excluding any postmedieval restorations, he identified two groups each with three hands. The first group belongs to the Four Prophet Phase, the second to the Nine Prophet Phase. The first hand of group one, the Four Prophet Phase, is the same as the hand which did the inscription in the apse: the letters A, H, M, and R are characteristic. Consequently, on Demus' dating of the apse, which is partially derived from a comparison with the east dome, the Four Prophet Phase paleography is said to belong to the early twelfth century. In the second group, all three hands belong to the same workshop. They can be dated through elements of form, style, and decoration. The strong broadening of verticals and legs, the deliberate contouring of bows, the gradual predomination of uncial and pseudo-uncial forms, and the occasional use of ornamental forms belongs to a Gothic period. The onset of this stylistic and

<sup>8</sup>These arguments are set out in detail in *ibid.*, I, 44–45.

<sup>9</sup>The reasons for this are explained in detail in E. J. W. Hawkins, "Further Observations on the Narthex Mosaics in St. Sophia at Istanbul," *DOP* 22 (1968), 165 note 16.

<sup>10</sup>Chapter 21 in Demus, *Mosaics of San Marco*, I, 295–308, 299–300 on the east dome. Demus himself makes some points about the paleography (I, 45).



formal development goes back to the beginning of the second quarter of the twelfth century, reaching its high point in the thirteenth. One of the key forms of this style is the pseudo-uncial A, with one straight leg and one waved leg to the peak and top bar. This form is rarely found before the last decade of the twelfth century, and so Kloos dates the Nine Prophet Phase inscriptions to around the close of the twelfth century.

Ernest Hawkins made his observations in 1975 when he was present at San Marco during the photographing of the mosaics for Demus' publication. He took the opportunity to mount the scaffold to examine the mosaics at closer range and to photograph details of them. Basing our conclusions on his work, we would suggest that the evidence of the east dome can be interpreted differently. Our emphasis lies primarily in the archaeology of the dome mosaics and in Ernest Hawkins' unrivaled knowledge of the techniques of mosaic-making.

#### THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE DOME MOSAICS

##### *Construction of the Mosaic*

The normal procedure in making a dome mosaic was to complete the central medallion and then to work downwards, laying the gold in concentric circles to complete the plain zone of gold to a horizontal line just above where the tops of the haloes were to be. Such a line is apparent from above the Habakkuk inscription, around the Nine Prophet Phase figures to above the name of Isaiah, where it stops with the start of the Four Prophet Phase. There is no such evidence of a normal work procedure along the suture line, which follows a jagged course. After laying the gold, the next stage was to construct the full-length figures one by one. Between the Nine Prophet Phase figures, a straight suture is apparent in every case. Between the Four Prophet Phase figures, such a suture is only apparent between Obadiah and Habakkuk and between Daniel and Obadiah, though this is complicated by the two phases of the Daniel figure. This suggests that the Nine Prophet Phase figures were constructed systematically, each figure within its own allotted space and regularly laid gold tesserae.

In contrast, there is no such evidence of a normal work procedure in the gold above the Four Prophet Phase figures. These were inserted into a preexisting space, necessitating a less orderly organization scheme. This is implied by the less regular gold tesserae and by features such as the inscription of Obadiah's name (Fig. 4). This was clearly not conceived of as a unity, trailing as it does along a single line and clumsily disrupted by a wide space between the "B" and "D," with the width of the "H" below distorted where the vertical joint runs through it.

All of these features taken together indicate a mosaicist working in an improvised manner, fitting in a restoration and matching the Four Prophet Phase to an already existing Nine Prophet Phase. Restoration in the other direction, from Four to Nine, would, in our opinion, have taken place differently. The mosaicist would have been compelled to smooth the suture and to regularize Obadiah's name.

*Isaiah's Inscription*

This inscription is the only inscription in the whole series of prophets to be set out in a straight line. In Demus' schema, this would always have been the case. Indeed, if one believes that the Four Prophet Phase is the earlier, then the entire position of the group of nine figures is wholly determined by only the last three letters of Isaiah's inscription. If the Nine Prophet Phase is earlier, then an alternative argument is possible. It is reasonable to suppose that the single line arrangement was the result of the resiting of the earlier inscription *Pa* from under the name, where it would clearly have been substantially destroyed by the suture, to its present position after the remaking of the figure of Jeremiah, which, in its extended pose, leaves insufficient space under the name "Isaiah." The laying of the gold in the roughly triangular area below the inscription YSAIAS, between the hand and suture, with lines which deviate slightly from the normal horizontal direction, suggest that this was relaid with Nine Prophet Phase gold in the course of restoration work on the Four Prophet Phase (Fig. 2).

*The Suture between Habakkuk and Hosea*

This suture descends from the end of the horizontal boundary line at the base of the plain zone of gold, just above and to the left of the Nine Prophet Phase inscription ABA. The suture cuts through the right-hand side of Habakkuk's halo, to the outer corner of the top of the scroll held by Hosea, and from there follows the Nine Prophet Phase gold double outline around Hosea's forearm to the point where it enters the sleeve of his robe. At this point, the double outline disappears and Four Prophet Phase gold tesserae abut the edge of the garment as far as the lowest point of the sleeve below the elbow. Here, the gold of the Nine Prophet Phase again outlines the sleeve (Figs. 3 and 5).

We suggest that this filling in of the gold ground from the secondary Four Prophet Phase figures to the surviving margins of the original work is the result of improvisation on the part of the mosaicist. It is not laid in a horizontal manner but has the appearance of having been laid to fill the space between the two figures, from Habakkuk to Hosea. This would not be the case if the Four Prophet Phase gold was the earlier area. Where Hosea's sleeve survived, from forearm to elbow, the less regularly shaped colored glass tesserae of the sleeve remained, though the gold was lost. This is a not uncommon phenomenon in a mosaic where there has been considerable loss of background gold. The horizontal lines of the Four Prophet Phase gold were brought right up to the firm contour of the sleeve, again suggesting the secondary nature of this phase, since if the Nine Prophet Phase was secondary, there would be no reason not to have a continuous double gold line along the whole sleeve: the mosaicist would complete it as a matter of routine.

Just to the left and below the level of the point of the sleeve, ten of the Four Prophet Phase gold tesserae form a small curve, six above and four below, in a short double stroke. This is Demus' double line, referred to above (1,i). Rather than the remains of a figure, this represents another aspect of the repair work.<sup>11</sup> We have described above the

<sup>11</sup>Demus' suggestion, mentioned in 1.i, that the gold would remain to form a contour is, in Ernest Hawkins' experience, a far less common occurrence than the actual colored tesserae of the figure surviving (as we mentioned above).

path of the suture between Habakkuk and Hosea. In the small gap between the boundaries of Nine and Four Prophet Phase gold, at the margin of the Nine Prophet Phase gold below the prophet's arm, the mosaicist faced the issue of how to make a neat junction with the untidy surviving edge of the mass of small tesserae. These could not be lined up with the larger gold tesserae, as these large tesserae were inserted from the left, the wrong side. Rather than the shadow outline of a ghostly figure, the double line of tesserae acts as a firm line against which the newly laid Four Prophet Phase gold lines could be terminated. This then allows for the rounding up of an existing small irregular edge which could be abutted (Fig. 5).

### *Hosea's Scroll*

The lower corner of the top of the scroll below Hosea's hand suffered a loss before being reduced to its present form (Fig. 6). The double line of small gold tesserae breaks off just beside the little finger and is missing around the smoothed off corner of the scroll, but resumes immediately beneath this. The implication of this is inescapable. The roll at this corner of the scroll had been lost and was repaired by the mere rounding off of the end of the truncated roll of the scroll when the Four Prophet Phase gold was laid. Hosea's scroll is the only Nine Prophet Phase scroll to be rounded: the rest are square-shaped at both sides of the top. The top ends of all Four Prophet Phase scrolls are, however, rounded. Either all that survived of Hosea was the top of his scroll and the entire figure was remade from this point, or Hosea's scroll was repaired when the Four Prophet Phase figures were inserted. We feel the latter course to have been the more probable.

### *Tesserae Colors*

Demus noted that orange vermillion tesserae are only present in the Four Prophet Phase and the rainbow medallion around Christ Emmanuel. Hawkins' observations note the mixture of tesserae in the red segments of the medallion between the figures of David and Habakkuk as being brown-red, orange vermillion, pink to red terra-cotta. White painted limestone and pink terra-cotta is used in the segments between the figures of Solomon and Habakkuk. However, the medallion appears all of a piece with the Nine Prophet Phase, which suggests that repairs carried out on the rainbow medallion, damaged at the same time as the Nine Prophet Phase, would include tesserae of the same material as this phase.

If Demus is right in saying that it is the larger area which was replaced, why is there next to no evidence of reuse of tesserae from the lost Four Prophet Phase section, significantly orange vermillion, in the Nine Prophet Phase figures? However, if the Nine Prophet Phase and the medallion borders are seen as earlier than the Four Prophet Phase, then the presence of a handful of orange vermillion tesserae in the Nine Prophet Phase area of the medallion can be explained as small-scale patching, the rainbow segments of the border having been clearly repaired on several occasions.

It should be borne in mind that whichever phase is the later, it represents a repair phase fitting in with an already existing scheme of decoration. Consequently, one might



expect to find evidence suggesting a somewhat ad hoc patching job. It is in this context that details such as the additional little finger on the right hand of Obadiah (Fig. 7, overpainted later and not mentioned by Demus, but clearly visible in his photographs)<sup>12</sup> and the patchwork body of Daniel seems to fit best.

This also provides an explanation for the peculiarities of Daniel's inscription. Here the initial letter is reduced to half the height of the other letters and is inserted so close to the halo that it impinges on the outer of the two rows of gold outline. This only makes sense if the inscription was inserted backwards, being crammed in to the space available, which in turn suggests repair rather than original planning (Fig. 8).

Further, below the "L," and beside the contraction for "prophet," there is an ovate form made in the gold, with a point protruding toward the lowest line of the letter "E." This may have resulted from an attempt made at the commencement of this phase of the work to extend Obadiah's scroll. Such a move would have allowed sufficient length for the unusually long inscription on the scroll to enable the letters to be nearer the average size. If this had been the case, then Obadiah's arm and hand, grasping the outer corner of the top of the scroll, would have restricted the space for Daniel's inscription still further. This may be why the present scheme was adopted and provides an explanation for the odd formation in the gold. Certainly, however, these points reinforce the concept that the Four Prophet Phase figures are more of a patching job than the original, planned work.

This archaeological evidence seems to indicate very clearly that Demus was mistaken in his interpretation of the construction of the mosaics of the east dome. This, in turn, raises a problem over the incompatibility of archaeology with style analysis. Demus himself believed that the archaeological evidence he put forward for the east dome made his case, and his paleographic and style analyses are very much based on evidence that he already considered proven. However, we believe that many of Demus' style arguments remain conclusive in proposing a date for the mosaics of the dome, and that style and archaeology can be partly reconciled.

#### THE STYLE OF THE MOSAICS<sup>13</sup>

There is no doubt that there are two distinct styles visible in the east dome mosaics: Demus' outstanding description of their appearances illustrate this very clearly. However, it is also apparent that he underplays the undeniable similarities between the two phases. These similarities must also play a part in any dating based on style.

As mentioned above, Demus bases his analysis of the two phases on a comparison between the Four Prophet Phase figures, which he characterizes as tall, slender, and elegant, with the stocky, bulky figures of the Nine Prophet Phase. This distinction is derived from his comparison of the adjacent figures of Jeremiah (Four Prophet Phase) and Isaiah (Nine Prophet Phase) (Figs. 9 and 10). According to Demus, Four Prophet Phase figures are tall and dignified with slender bodies and small, noble heads. They have broad gestures and postures; they are beautiful in a classical or neoclassical sense; their

<sup>12</sup>Demus, *Mosaics of San Marco*, I. pl. 20.

<sup>13</sup>For an introduction to style concerns in this period, see D. Mouriki, "Stylistic Trends in Monumental Painting of Greece during the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," *DOP* 34/35 (1980–81), 77–124.

drapery is rectilinear, hard, dry, and spiky, with few form-defining curves. In contrast, he characterizes the Nine Prophet Phase figures as broad and stocky in build with larger and heavier hands and feet. They are bulkier, made up of bulging shapes and folds following curvilinear designs in concentric or bundled curves around the knees, belly, shoulders, and hips; garments cling in the Byzantine “damp fold” convention. The faces of this group are more stylized: where Jeremiah’s face “realizes” the ideal of “beauty” in a classical or neoclassical sense, Isaiah’s is treated broadly and sculpturally.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, these two phases are not as stylistically distinct as Demus makes out. By choosing to compare two specific figures, Isaiah and Jeremiah, Demus selects the only figure in the entire east dome, Jeremiah, who exhibits the “tall, elegant” aspect that Demus claims as a feature of the Four Prophet Phase group. Obadiah and Habakkuk of the Four Prophet group are as short and stocky as any of the Nine Prophet Phase figures (Figs. 11 and 12).<sup>15</sup> Obadiah can be distinguished from Jeremiah in the same way that Demus distinguishes Jeremiah from Isaiah. Obadiah’s draperies split into a mass of details, with broken, jagged shapes over curved ones with little continuous shading. In contrast to Jeremiah, there is a widespread use of interpenetrating tones of dark and light shades—“hatching,” as Demus calls it. Jeremiah displays some unity of form, with individual motifs integrated in an overall concept of the body. Obadiah does not. Habakkuk appears even further from Jeremiah in terms of classical elegance. Folds are flat, spiky, and broken, the drapery impossible to disentangle. Again, hatching is used frequently, in a manner reminiscent of chrysography in Byzantine mosaics.<sup>16</sup>

The Four Phase and Nine Phase figures actually look very similar. The draperies of Isaiah and Obadiah share features such as the boxed curves running down the right-hand side of Isaiah’s body and Obadiah’s right shoulder, and the garment loop over the left hand. Jeremiah himself exhibits similar patterns on the right knee and elbow. “V”-shaped folds with tapering ends, often nested, are apparent in both phases. Further comparisons can be made in facial appearances of the two groups. Again, Jeremiah, Obadiah, and Habakkuk share similarities in the construction of the faces, most significantly in the curve of the eyebrows, the bags under the eyes, and the formation of the cheeks. However, the circular pattern of Obadiah’s forehead is a feature of the Nine Prophet Phase: in the case of Malachi, the circles are formed around two disks (Fig. 13); in the case of Haggai, disks are not used. The cheeks of Haggai and Habakkuk are very similar. Indeed, the cheek formations of both east dome phases are also apparent at the Cappella Palatina, where John Chrysostom demonstrates the sharp angles of the cheeks of the Nine Prophet phase while Gregory combines these angles with the sweeping lines of the Four Prophet Phase (Fig. 14). Obadiah’s ears match perfectly those of Malachi and Zachariah; the bags under the eyes of all three are formed very similarly. Daniel and Isaiah may look unlike in facial terms, but Daniel and Zachariah seem very alike. Both have a smooth left side to the face and a bagged right-hand side.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup>For the style of the Four Prophet Phase, see Demus, *Mosaics of San Marco*, I, 48–50. For the comparison between Jeremiah and Isaiah, see 45–46. The style of the Nine Prophet Phase is described on 162–66.

<sup>15</sup>Daniel presents a different problem since his head and body are of different phases and may even be later restorations.

<sup>16</sup>Demus, *Mosaics of San Marco*, I, 49–50.

<sup>17</sup>If one believes that Daniel’s head belongs to the Four Prophet Phase. Indeed, we feel that Daniel’s face is so different from the faces of all other figures in the east dome that it may well be a fifteenth- and sixteenth-century restoration.

Further, both phases of the east dome, rather than just the Four Prophet Phase as Demus suggests, can be compared with mosaics in the apse. The heads of Nicholas and Mark in the apse show elements of both styles. If anything, the formation of Mark's cheeks is perhaps closer to a Nine Prophet Phase figure with the development of the pear-shaped bag on the right cheek and the deep "V" shapes used to build up the cheeks (Fig. 15). The two styles are indeed so closely related that Demus on several occasions suggests that one element was copied into the other phase.<sup>18</sup> This all suggests that the temporal gap Demus perceives between the two phases of the east dome can be collapsed; rather than dating one phase to the early twelfth century and one to the seventies of the twelfth century, they can be run together. The dome would then represent the works of two different artists in two slightly different traditions, the one repairing the mosaic of the other only a short time after its destruction. We would place this work in the late twelfth century.

There are several problems inherent in Demus' dating of the Four Prophet Phase to the early twelfth century. He uses his perceived contrast between the two phases to demonstrate that the Four Prophet Phase is the earlier. He argues that its more abstract style contains elements of eleventh-century style, drawing comparisons with the Basilica Ursiana, Ravenna, dated to 1112, which he suggests predates the east dome, and with the undated apse of San Giusto at Trieste. Above all, Demus relates the Four Prophet Phase to the apse of San Marco; he argues that Jeremiah is in some respects a copy of Mark, though as we have shown above, both east dome phases bear comparison with the apse. He also traces influences from Daphni in the draperies of the figures and in the way in which Obadiah holds his scroll, though suggesting that the flatter, more linearized style of the Four Prophet Phase goes beyond that of Daphni, and sees links with Cefalù (ca. 1148) and the John and Eirene panel of 1112 in Hagia Sophia, Istanbul.

Demus' closest stylistic comparisons are, however, with manuscript art, where he sees similar zigzag folds to those of the Four Phase figures.<sup>19</sup> These eleventh- and twelfth-century manuscript comparisons allow him to date the Four Prophet Phase to the early twelfth century. However, he is unable to cite any direct stylistic comparisons from eleventh- and early twelfth-century monumental art for these zigzag folds. Instead, he is compelled to point out fragments from here and there in the Byzantine world. Demus' dilemma reveals some of the dangers inherent in relying on style analysis in Byzantine art. How much weight can be given to comparisons across media? How far are motifs from miniature art transferable to large-scale mosaic art with all the problems that working in mosaic presents? Would Byzantine manuscript styles have appeared so soon in Venetian mosaics but nowhere else in the Byzantine world? Why are there no mosaic parallels?

In contrast to the Four Prophet figures, Demus suggests that the figural style of the Nine Prophet Phase can be characterized as a form of the so-called dynamic style of late twelfth-century Byzantine painting. He uses Kitzinger's characterization of this style as

<sup>18</sup>For example, he suggests that the figure of Hosea was copied from that of Obadiah (*Mosaics of San Marco*, I, 166). It could, of course, have been the other way round.

<sup>19</sup>Notably, the eleventh-century Armenian Gospel book of Sebaste, the twelfth-century Homilies of James Kokkinobaphos (Vat. gr. 1162 and Paris gr. 1208), and the enamels of the Pala d'Oro (ca. 1100–1105). Twelfth-century Italian manuscripts such as the Pantheon Bible (Vat. lat. 12958) are also believed to show elements of this zigzag style. See *Mosaics of San Marco*, I, 51–53.



one “exhibiting agitated draperies which underline the action” with “the whole surface . . . churned up through violent contrasts of light and dark.”<sup>20</sup> Even a figure in complete repose can be overlaid with an intricate system of curling and swirling folds. Each garment is broken up by the artist into cascading zigzags and spiraling motifs, which obscure the actual design of the costume and the structure of the body wearing it. The Nine Prophet Phase, according to Demus, is not an extreme form of this dynamic style but a nascent stage, for there are no agitated movements, exaggerated attitudes, or flying folds. The figures are stocky and their faces placid.<sup>21</sup> This is true: these prophets certainly lack the dynamism of the late twelfth-century figures from, say, Nerezi. Rather, the extreme zigzag folds of Obadiah and Habakkuk of the Phase Four figures should be seen as closer to this dynamic style (Figs. 11 and 12).

The Nine Prophet Phase figures all have curvilinear, rounded draperies (Figs. 9 and 13); the Four Prophet Phase figures a spiky, jagged, hard system of folds. The zigzag style of both Obadiah and Habakkuk’s draperies presents an almost *zackpustilische* appearance, nothing like Jeremiah’s softer, less brittle folds. Demus claims that this style and the zigzag style of thirteenth-century Germanic painting have nothing in common, though he cites no reason for this claim and in general fails to find any eleventh- or twelfth-century comparisons for this zigzag quality, except for the above-mentioned handful of manuscript examples.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, the curvilinear draperies found in the Nine Prophet Phase are present in mosaic art generally between the tenth and twelfth centuries.<sup>23</sup> Stylistic comparisons in monumental art for the zigzag style are later: they start to appear in the dynamic style of Nerezi and Monreale, but one has to wait for thirteenth-century examples, such as the Panagia Koumbelidiki at Kastoria, to see zigzags. The jagged dynamism of the drawings of the Wolfenbüttel Musterbuch (Cod. Guelph.61,2 Aug 8°), which may or may not be based to some extent on the thirteenth-century mosaics at San Marco, are also similar.<sup>24</sup> The mixture of deep, dark jagged folds with lighter spiky ones is an additional feature of the thirteenth-century *zackenstile*, apparent in manuscripts such as the Ingeborg Psalter (Chantilly Museum, Ms. 1695). In contrast, the folds of the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts cited by Demus are less jagged and enfold bodies tightly. They also exhibit elements of the curvilinear style typical of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and of the Nine Prophet Phase.

Demus actually identifies rather more eleventh-century motifs present in monumental art for the Nine Prophet Phase than for the Four Prophet Phase. These include the tiny tongue-shaped ends protruding from the narrow sleeve of the right arm of Isaiah, the spiraling snail-shell-like whorl of his beard under the left ear, and the interruption of the dark seam of the mantle where it crosses the chest with a couple of white tesserae,

<sup>20</sup>E. Kitzinger, *The Mosaics of Monreale* (Palermo, 1960), 69 ff.

<sup>21</sup>Demus, *Mosaics of San Marco*, I, 167–68.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 51.

<sup>23</sup>Similar drapery formations are apparent at Hosios Loukas, Daphni, Nea Moni, in all the Sicilian churches, and in Italian manuscripts of this period, including the Pantheon Bible, which Demus cites in comparison with the Four Prophet Phase figures.

<sup>24</sup>On *zackenstile* and the Wolfenbüttel Musterbuch, see H. Buchthal, *The “Musterbuch” of Wolfenbüttel and Its Position in the Art of the Thirteenth Century* (Vienna, 1979), and especially pls. II, 2 (Christ and Eve), XIII, 19 (Evangelists).

and the sling motif of Haggai's mantle.<sup>25</sup> Demus argues that the hanging drapery folds, open in front, seen in the Nine Phase figures are not typically Byzantine, where flying folds tend to be closed. However, the best parallels for open hanging folds come from the eleventh-century church of St. Sophia in Ohrid.<sup>26</sup>

His response to the quantity of eleventh-century parallels in monumental art apparent in the Nine Prophet Phase is to label the Nine Prophet Phase as "archaizing" and possibly "provincial."<sup>27</sup> The style, he says, goes considerably beyond that of Cefalù and the Cappella Palatina, but the figures are not as advanced as those at Monreale. This enables him to date this phase to the seventies of the twelfth century. On the other hand, the number of these eleventh-century motifs present in the Nine Prophet Phase but not the Four Prophet Phase surely suggests that this phase should be dated earlier than the Four Prophet Phase, perhaps to the third quarter of the twelfth century.

In addition, several of the stylistic trends in the Nine Prophet Phase which Demus defines as "later" can in fact be seen in earlier works of art. The modeling of legs, especially those of the Virgin, with pointed ovals in concentric patterns over the knees, are taken by Demus as a late feature: they resemble Cefalù rather than early San Marco. In the Virgin's maphorion, chrysography is seen as creating a tight linear pattern used for decoration rather than highlighting drapery design or modeling. Similarly, the white lines on the Virgin's face are obtrusive, unlike the painterly style of Daniel. This sort of modeling is present in the Eirene panel, but Demus suggests that the San Marco face is further along the way from tonal modeling to a linear, structural design.<sup>28</sup>

However, the ovals on the knees of the Virgin and the nine prophets are also present in tenth-century ivories, such as the one showing the coronation of Constantine Porphyrogenitus by Christ (in the Moscow Museum of Fine Art), and in an eleventh/twelfth century marble plaque of the Virgin Orans, possibly from the church of St. George of the Mangana, and now in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum. Curvilinear folds around knees are also present to a greater or lesser extent in mosaics from Hosios Loukas, Nea Moni, and Daphni to the Sicilian monuments, and in most wall paintings from this period. In fact, they seem to be a very typical feature of both eleventh- and twelfth-century art, a period where much emphasis lies on rounded folds. The use of chrysography for patterning is yet another feature of eleventh-century mosaics at Hosios Loukas, Daphni, and above all Nea Moni. Further, Demus' comparison of the east dome to the Eirene panel is contradictory. That the Four Prophet Phase should resemble it in modeling and the Nine Prophet Phase in linearity stretches style analysis too far. That both phases can be compared to the Eirene panel does return us, however, to the point that the two phases may be more or less contemporary.

The style evidence does, as Demus said, point to the Nine Prophet Phase figures as twelfth century. However, it also suggests that there is no real stylistic reason for the Four Prophet Phase to be dated to the early twelfth century. Demus sees the Nine Prophet

<sup>25</sup>Demus, *Mosaics of San Marco*, I, 162. For Haggai's mantle, see the eleventh-century parallels in monumental art at Daphni, Trieste, and Sicily, and in minor arts of this period (as Demus himself notes, *Mosaics of San Marco*, I, 165).

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., I, 164.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., I, 169.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., I, 163.

Phase style as archaic; we prefer to see it as orthodox; it follows the trend of twelfth-century mosaic decoration. The Four Prophet Phase shows far fewer eleventh-century stylistic features than the Nine Prophet Phase, and some elements that suggest thirteenth-century art. It also seems that stylistically, the gap between the two phases is not as great as Demus originally suggested. The closest comparison for both phases is with each other and with the mosaics of the apse and central dome of San Marco. Further, both phases can be compared to elements at Monreale (1174–82). The two rows of standing saints in the apse show affinities in draperies with both the curvilinear and the zigzag style of the east dome, and with both sets of faces (Fig. 16). The gap between the two phases is perhaps no more than a generation, which would account for the paleographical peculiarities and differences. Consequently, we would follow Demus in dating the Nine Prophet Phase figures to the late twelfth century, though perhaps the third quarter, but we place the Four Prophet Phase figures some years later, to the end of that century, but with little temporal differences between them.

#### PALEOGRAPHY<sup>29</sup>

The paleography of the east dome presents several problems. Kloos admits at the outset that there is a lack of comparative material for dating the inscriptions at San Marco: “almost nothing has been written on Italian inscriptions of the period in question or in the specialised field of mosaic inscriptions.”<sup>30</sup> However, he states that the basis of his analysis would rest upon the changing style of the letters, determined by the manner in which they were executed: the vertical and horizontal elements, the thickening of strokes. This approach makes no allowance for the nature of mosaic and the constructions of mosaics. The way in which a mosaic is built up inevitably leads to irregularities in appearance; to place too much weight on these thickenings is to ignore the effect that the change of medium will inevitably have on the way in which letters are formed. Kloos detects six different hands at work on the thirteen inscriptions in the east dome. Do these represent six different literate mosaicists, all consciously shaping the letters in accordance with their own version of twelfth-century paleography, or is it rather two or three mosaicists adapting elements and strokes of the letters to fit with the technical requirements of the mosaic?

Rather than going to the extent of identifying six hands, we would stress, again, the similarities between all the inscriptions. For example, there are similarities in the curly “G” found in the scrolls of both Obadiah (Four Prophet) and Isaiah (Nine Prophet). Square “E”s are used in both phases. Both phases can be compared with twelfth-century Italian manuscripts such as the Pantheon Bible, the Montalcino Bible, and the Bible in the Vatican library, Ms. Vat. Lat. 10405.

Kloos dates the inscriptions on two grounds. First, he sees the Nine Prophet Phase inscriptions as early Gothic in style. The onset of this stylistic development, he says, goes back to the second quarter of the twelfth century; however, on the basis of the pseudo-

<sup>29</sup>We are very grateful to Richard Gameson (Courtauld Institute) and Michael Evans (Warburg Institute) for their advice on the paleography of the east dome.

<sup>30</sup>R. M. Kloos, “The Paleography of the Inscriptions of San Marco,” ch. 21 in Demus, *Mosaics of San Marco*, I, 295.



uncial “A” with a straight leg and a waved leg, found only on Isaiah’s scroll, he dates the Nine Prophet Phase to the very late twelfth century. He claims that these pseudo-uncial “A”s are rare before the last decade of the twelfth century. However, pseudo-uncial “A”s are present in Italian manuscripts of the twelfth century, including the Pantheon Bible and the other manuscripts cited above, so we would suggest that there are some grounds for moving the dating of the Nine Prophet Phase inscriptions into the last half of the twelfth century.

Second, he dates the Four Prophet Phase inscriptions as earlier on the grounds of the similarities with Hand 1, responsible only for Jeremiah’s name and the PHA of Isaiah’s inscription, with the inscriptions in the apse. As we have already suggested, both sets of figures in the east dome can be compared to the apse, so this proves nothing. Kloos also notes that the other two hands he perceives in the Four Prophet group are related to Hand 1 “only through an occasional form.”<sup>31</sup> We have already indicated that they also share “occasional forms” with the Nine Prophet inscriptions. Consequently, it seems that Kloos has no firm grounds for his dating of the inscriptions of the Four Prophet Phase figures; their similarities to the Nine Phase inscriptions suggest that the temporal gap can be closed once more.

The difference in contractions and letter forms can as easily be related to scribal differences as to temporal differences: when the dome was repaired, a scribe with different handwriting, perhaps slightly more old-fashioned in his use of contractions and avoidance of pseudo-uncials, was responsible for the lettering of the Four Prophet Phase.

#### THE COMPOSITION OF THE EAST DOME

One final aspect of the east dome that we would like to discuss is its actual composition. Thirteen prophets and the Virgin around a bust of Christ Emmanuel form a unique iconographic scheme. Demus suggested that there were twelve prophets in the original scheme and that Hosea was added when the Nine Prophet Phase was made. On the contrary, the dome was always designed as it stands today. The main axis of the dome from east to west runs through the Virgin and the figure of Jonah. Consequently, the prophets fall into two equal groups of six each.<sup>32</sup> Hosea, Sofonias, and Jonah hold prophecies pointing forward to the Resurrection and Last Judgment, appropriate enough around the figure of Jonah who was often taken as a foreshadowing of the Resurrection of Christ. The remaining figures, grouped around the Virgin, hold prophecies relating to the Incarnation. In this way, moving from the Incarnation to the Resurrection, anchored at each point by the Virgin, symbol of the Incarnation, and Jonah, a type of the resurrected Christ, the dome as it exists can be seen to display a consistent message without the need to take away figures to even up the numbers.

#### CONCLUSION

The archaeological evidence we have put forward indicates that the two phases of the east dome need to be reversed. This, in turn, affects the dating of the dome. We

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 299.

<sup>32</sup> We owe this observation and suggestion to John Lowden.

believe, with Demus, that the Nine Prophet Phase should be dated to the late twelfth century; on the basis of both archaeology and style, the Four Prophet Phase can be dated later. By dating both phases to the late twelfth century, we have opened the way for a general reorganization of the dates of the entire mosaic cycle of San Marco, one which moves the whole dating scheme later in time. This, in turn, calls for a reconsideration of the role that Byzantine mosaicists may or may not have played in Venetian art from this period, at a time when relations between the two powers were strained.

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